

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 6666

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SP

SUBJ: TERRORISM: THE DEATH SENTENCE ISSUE

REF : MADRID 6538

SUMMARY: SPANISH PRESS HAS PROVIDED DETAILED TREATMENT OF THE EUROPEAN REACTION TO DEATH SENTENCES GIVEN TO 11 CONVICTED TERRORISTS IN RECENT WEEKS. MADRID NEWSPAPERS HAVE ALSO METICULOUSLY REPORTED THE POPE'S APPEAL FOR CLEMENCY AND ITS ECHOES WITHIN THE SPANISH CHURCH HIERARCHY. GOS IS FACED WITH DIFFICULT DECISION.END SUMMARY

1. MADRID DAILIES HAVE, WITHIN THE LAST FEW DAYS, BEEN CAREFULLY CHRONICLING ADVERSE OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE REACTION TO THE SENTENCES IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND REPORTING THE VARIOUS PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS. SEPT 25

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"ABC" COMPILES THREE RELATED STORIES UNDER ONE HEADLINE

LEADING WITH THE ELYSEE'S STATEMENT INDICATING A FRENCH DISPOSITION TO PERSUADE EC COUNTRIES TO JOINTLY PETITION FOR PARDON.THE "ABC" GOES ON TO REPORT PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS AND THE PETITIONS PRODUCED BY SUCH BODIES AS THE PARISIAN COLLEGE OF LAWYERS AND THE FRENCH ASSN OF DEMOCRATIC JURISTS.

2. "ARRIBA", "ABC"AND "INFORMACIONES" PROVIDE ACCOUNTS OF THE WEDNESDAY ATTACK IN PARIS ONTHE SPANISH LUXURY "TALGO" TRAIN BOUND FOR BARCELONA, WHICH WAS FORCED TO DEPART WITHOUT TAKING ON PASSENGERS. SEPT 24 "INFORMACIONES" ALSO REPORTS ITALIAN AIRPORT WORKERS BOYCOTT OF IBERIA FLIGHTS AND TUESDAY ANNOUNCEMENT BY MILANESE TELEPHONE OPERATORS THT THEY WOULD REFUSE TO CONNECT ROUTINE CALLS TO SPAIN. DOCKWORKER BOYCOTTS IN FRANCE AND PORTUGAL WERE ALSO REPORTED.

3. THE POPE'S DECLARATION OF SUPPORT FOR CLEMENCY WAS WIDELY AND PROMINANTLY CARRIED IN THE MADRID DAILIES. THURSDAY MORNING NEWSPAPERS ALSO REPORT A STATEMENT BY THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF BARCELONA ECHOING THAT OF THE POPE. THE ARCHBISHOP CONDEMNS ALL FORMS OF TERRORISM BUT ASKS HIS CONGREGATION TO PRAY FOR THE GUIDANCE "OF OUR COMPETENT AUTHORITIES THROUGH THE PATHS OF CLEMENCY AND MAGNANIMITY". A PETITION FROM THE VICAR OF VALLECAS, NEAR MADRID, TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF MADRID FAVORING A PARDON FOR THE CONVICTED TERRORISTS APPEARED IN "YA" AND "ABC".

4. AS REPORTED EARLIER, HE GOS - REMEMBERING THE BURGOS TRIALS - EXPECTED A STORM OF PROTEST IN EUROPE OVER THE PROSPECTIVE EXECUTIONS. THOSE AROUND ARIAS HAVE FELT T THE ANTI-TERRORIST LAW WAS A POLITICAL NECESSITY AND THAT SOME EXECUTIONS WOULD BE NECESSARY. BUT THE EUROPEAN PROTESTS, AND THE POPE'S REMARKS, ARE BOUND TO HAVE SOME EFFECT. A WELL-PLACED SOURCE IN THE PRESIDENCY HAS TOLD POL COUNSELOR RECENTLY THAT HE EXPECTED (A) THE EXECUTION OF SOME TERRORISTS, AS A DETERRENT TO TERRORISM, PARTICULARLY BY THE FRAP, AND IN ORDER TO AVOID A CRISIS WITH THE CIVIL GUARD AND SOME OF THE MILITARY. AND (B) THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE DEATH SENTENCES WOULD PROBABLY BE CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMUTED. IN THIS WAY, THE EXECUTION OF A FEW ASSASSINS COUPLED WITH THE COMMUTATION OF THE MAJORITY OF THE DEATH SENTENCES WOULD RESPOND TO THE VERY REAL DEMANDS FOR DECISIVE ACTION AGAINST TERRORISTS WHILE MITIGATING THE EUROPEAN OUTCRY. HE ADDED THAT THE GOVT'S SUCCESS IN ROUNDING UP BOTH ETA AND FRAP HAD GIVEN TI A CERTAIN DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF RIGHT-WING ACCUSATIONS THAT THE ARIAS GOVT WAS SOFT ON TERRORISM, MAKING

IT POSSIBLE FOR THE GOVT TO ACT WITH MORE DELIBERATION
IN DECIDING WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE DEATH PENALTIES. AT THE
TIME HE SPOKE, THE RUMORS THAT SOME CABINET MINISTERS
WOULD RESIGN -- AN ADDED COMPLICATION -- OVER THE
EXECUTIONS HAD NOT BEGUN. (SOME MINISTERS MAY BE
SAYING ONE THING IN OFFICIAL MEETINGS AND ANOTHER TO
THEIR FRIENDS.)

5. SOME SPANISH OBSERVERS EXPECT ACTION ON THE DEATH
SENTENCES AT TOMORROW'S CABINET MEETING. BUT IT IS JUST
AS POSSIBLE THAT THE GOVT MAY CONTINUE TO
DELIBERATE, SEEKING A CONSENSUS THAT WOULD AVOID THE
PROSPECT OF CABINET RESIGNATIONS AND YET SATISFY THE FORCES
OF LAW AND ORDER THAT THE MURDERS OF THEIR COMPANIONS HAD
NOT GONE UNPUNISHED. HAVING EMBARKED ON THE DEATH SENTENCES,
THE GOS, WERE IT TO REFUSE TO EXECUTE ANYONE, MIGHT
EVEN WIND UP ENCOURAGING TERRORISM BECAUSE THE PENALTIES
MIGHT SEEM INSUBSTANTIAL TO YOUTHS WHO EXPECT THE
REVOLUTIONARY MILLENIA (OR HOSTAGE KIDNAPPINGS) TO CUT SHORT
PRISON TERMS. OTHER REASONS GIVEN ARE THAT THE POLICE
MIGHT CEASE TO PURSUE TERRORISTS VIGOROUSLY OR THAT FAR-RIGHT
VIGILANTISM WOULD TAKE PLACE OF THE PROCESSES,
HOWEVER IMPERFECT, OF SPANISH JUSTICE. FOR THE GOS, THIS
IS AN UNCOMFORTABLE ISSUE AND ONE THAT WILL PROBABLY
DEPEND ULTIMATELY ON FRANCO.
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